

March 11, 2021

Rabbi Peltz - *Vayakhel-Pekudei*

This week, I want to begin with gratitude. Rachel, Yael, Ari, Ilan and I are so grateful for all of you who celebrated Yael's Bat Mitzvah with us last Shabbat. We so appreciate all of the wonderful notes, cards, and wishes that so many of you sent our way. All of this has meant so much for us, and made us feel even more grateful for our *kehilot kedoshot*, our sacred communities of TBS and Kellman Brown Academy. Given this, it seems *bashert* that this week the first of the two portions we read to end the book of *Shemot* is called *Vayakhel*.

*Vayakhel* contains the root *kahal*, which means community. The portion opens with Moshe gathering the whole community together to give them the final instructions for the building of the *mishkan*. The 13th century commentator Ramban says that Moshe called the entire community, men, women and children, together because all of them had volunteered to help in the work of building this portable sanctuary. He notes that this gathering takes place shortly after the sin of the golden calf, which was in last week's Torah portion. This gives the gathering even more significance. After such a traumatic event, the people needed to be together.

Ramban's commentary teaches us two important lessons about what it means to be a member of a community. The first is that the more you put into a community, the more you get out of community. Each Israelite donated time, efforts and resources for the common good. This gave each of them a sense of ownership over the *mishkan* and the religious community that it represents. By working together, each with our own abilities, we can create something bigger than ourselves. The second idea about community that Ramban brings is the importance of being there for each other during good times and bad. After the golden calf, Moshe rallies the people back together. He wishes to reassert that feeling of community that has been challenged. This is important to do in the difficult moments, and, perhaps because of the difficult moments, it is even more important to do so that we can savor the *s'mahot* – the really joyous events of our lives.

When community comes together to celebrate one of its own – whether for a *b'nai mitzvah*, an *aufruf*, the birth of a child or grandchild, a graduation or milestone – we lift each other up. We see the seeds of our collective labor blossom into our Jewish future. This is how I feel every time that I am privileged to celebrate a *simha* with you and your family, and how I felt last Shabbat as the *Abba* of the Bat Mitzvah girl. Thank you for sharing in my family's joy, and may we all get to celebrate many more *s'mahot* together, as a sacred community.